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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: poverty eradication

Statement submitted by the International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2012/1.

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Statement

During the forty-ninth session of the Commission for Social Development, there was much interest shown in social protection as an emerging issue. Social protection contributes to the achievement of Goal 1 (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger) of the Millennium Development Goals by transferring resources to those living in extreme poverty and enabling the beneficiaries to generate income, protect their assets and accumulate human capital (A/65/259). The outcome document of the September 2010 summit meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, entitled "Keeping the promise", states that "promoting universal access to social services and providing social protection floors can make an important contribution to consolidating and achieving further development gains" (General Assembly resolution 65/1). Many studies note the potential of social protection initiatives to promote progress towards the achievement of Goal 1, in particular target 1: halving income poverty by 2015 (A/65/259).

At a press conference at United Nations Headquarters on 14 February 2011, Michael Cichon, Director of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Social Security Department, said that stakeholders seemed to have forgotten that social security was indeed a human right. He stressed that implementing the Social Protection Floor Initiative in a developing country with an expenditure of as little as 3-4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) could reduce poverty by about 40 per cent.

Effective practices on the Social Protection Floor Initiative

A recent publication by ILO, the United Nations Development Programme and the Global South-South Development Academy entitled *Sharing Innovative Experiences: Successful Social Protection Floor Experiences* presents 18 case studies from 15 countries of the global South. Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and Chair of the Social Protection Floor Advisory Group, in the foreword to the publication, stated, "We hope that this collection of best practices will be a useful tool for all stakeholders — Governments, social partners, social protection institutions and other national and international stakeholders — involved in decision-making or in the process of building and implementing national social protection floors."

Social protection programmes within a human rights framework

In her report to the General Assembly (A/65/259), the independent expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty highlighted the importance of social protection measures in the Millennium Development Goals agenda. The independent expert also stressed that social protection measures designed, implemented and evaluated within the framework of a rights-based approach were more likely to ensure the achievement of the Goals and to result in long-term improvements. In the same report, she called upon States to devote increased attention to the issue of gender equality while designing, implementing and evaluating social protection programmes within a human rights framework.

The General Assembly, in its resolution 65/214, recalled that promoting universal access to social services and providing social protection floors could make

an important contribution to consolidating and achieving further development gains. Furthermore, social protection systems that addressed and reduced inequality and social exclusion were essential for protecting the gains made towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In the same resolution, the Assembly encouraged States, when designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating social protection programmes, to ensure gender mainstreaming and the promotion and protection of all human rights in accordance with their obligations under international human rights law.

Civil society campaign

Thousands of people from more than 110 countries from the global North and South have signed on to the "Support the Social Protection Floor Initiative" campaign, an online campaign initiated by the New York-based NGO Committee for Social Development, declaring:

> "We, members of civil society, strongly support the Social Protection Floor Initiative — a joint United Nations effort coordinated by the International Labour Organization and the World Health Organization and supported by United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations, development banks and other development partners.
>
> "About 75 per cent of people in the world do not have adequate social security. This lack of protection undermines social cohesion and economic performance and creates political and institutional instability. This floor is a necessary tool for eradicating poverty.
>
> "No one should live below a certain income level. Everyone should be able to access at least basic health services, primary education, housing, water, sanitation and other essential services. The two necessary elements for the social protection floor are social transfers to guarantee income security, food security and adequate nutrition, and universal access to essential services.
>
> "Universal
>
> "The social protection floor must be tailored to the needs of each country and builds on that country's existing social protection mechanisms. It aims to make it possible for everyone to enjoy the rights expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (art. 22): 'Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security'.
>
> "Affordable
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> "A social protection floor can be afforded by every country if integrated incrementally. A number of low- and middle-income countries have taken successful measures to build their national social protection floor.
>
> "We call on all Governments to implement a national social protection floor. We call on the United Nations to assist in the development and implementation of such policies."

Social Protection Floor Initiative programmes tailored to national needs, if implemented, would ensure a life of dignity for all, especially persons with disabilities, youth, older persons and families living in poverty.

We therefore call upon the States Members of the United Nations to:

- Ensure the implementation of the Social Protection Floor Initiative tailored to national needs by every United Nations Member State, with a specific focus on persons with disabilities, youth, older persons and families living in poverty;
- Assess all areas of social protection using gender analysis while designing, implementing and evaluating social protection programmes within a human rights framework;
- Invest domestically a minimum of 4 per cent of GDP on a universal social protection floor;
- Implement fully innovative sources of financing for development, such as the financial transaction tax, the international solidarity levy on airline tickets, debt swaps, combating tax havens and capital flight and reducing military expenditures;
- Use resources from innovative financing mechanisms to support United Nations Member States that lack sufficient revenue to implement the Social Protection Floor Initiative using domestic revenues.

Note: Statement endorsed by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council: Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants, Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Congregations of St. Joseph, Passionists International, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and VIVAT International.